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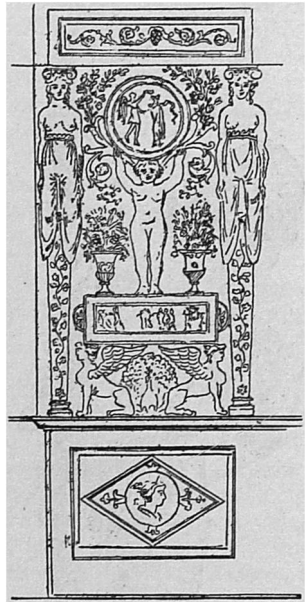
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## FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

## THE BOUDOIR.

LADY BARKER has written an amusing, inaccurate, and thoroughly womanly little volume which she entitles, *The Bedroom and Boudoir*. Towards the end of the book are these two sentences: "In one's own little den—which, by the



WHITE STUCCO PANEL, DESIGNED BY BRUNAN IN THE TIME OF THE DIRECTORY.

way, I should never myself dignify by the name of boudoir, a word signifying a place to idle and sulk in, instead of a retreat in which to be comfortable \* \* \*

And a little further on, "The bedrooms I am thinking of and writing about have, we must bear in mind, a certain element of the bower, or boudoir, or private sitting-room in them \* \* \*

Lady Barker goes no further; she does not give us her idea of what a boudoir ought to be; in fact the word is as superfluous in her title as it is in her text. Boudoir is not an English word nor an English thing; it is purely French, comparatively modern, and, unfortunately, a word of rather speckled reputation. According to Littre boudoir is derived from the verb *bouder*, to sulk, and "is so called because ladies retire into their boudoir when they wish to be alone." Evidently the fact of a woman going into her boudoir to seek solitude banishes from that room all vaporish, light, indiscreet, flighty ideas. Still we find that the usual epithets coupled with the word are elegant, charming, pretty, magnificent, pleasing, delicious, enchanting, enchanted, magic, rich, galant, voluptuous, perfumed, amorous, intoxicating, mysterious, obscure, sombre, retired, and, last of all, solitary. Seeking still more enlightenment from literary sources, we find that the word boudoir is not anterior to the beginning of the XVIII. century, and that from the first it has a bad reputation. The poets thunder against "these luxurious temples, where the pictures, the mirrors, the sofas, the bronzes all paint luxury, and all invite to pleasure." Crebillon lays the scene of his famous *Sopha* in a boudoir. Mme. de Genlis declares that in her time a woman of good company would never have given the name boudoir to any room in her house, and that its use dated only from Mmes. de Parabère, de Pompadour, and Dubarry, who imi-

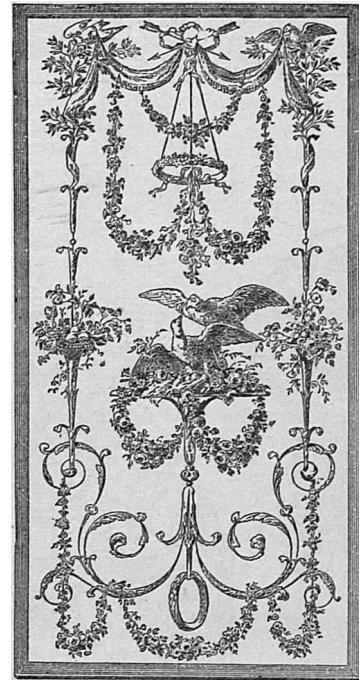
tated the Phrynes of the time. In short, poets, novelists, and memoir writers persistently represent the boudoir as a sort of battle-field, the scene of dénouements that are ruinous to feminine virtue, the asylum of the Graces, the Pleasures, and of Love. With all their flowery allusions and gallant associations we are carried far enough from the verb *bouder*, to sulk—the supposed origin of the word—a fact which led the witty Countess de Bradi to remark that "perhaps the novelists and poets, being profound observers as there are, had remarked that honest women do not sulk, and, consequently, do not trouble themselves about creating a special retreat for that occupation."

In point of fact it must be admitted that in the dissipated XVIII. century there were plenty of famous boudoirs that fully justified the discredit thrown upon the name then and since. Nevertheless, there are decorative ideas to be obtained from them, and one at least has remained in its charming entirety up to within a couple of years ago. This was the boudoir of Mlle. Duthé, which M. Leopold Double, the famous collector, had succeeded in reconstituting in his house in the Rue Louis Le Grand, and which, I remember, was the room examined with most curiosity by the ladies at the time of the sale of the collection in 1881. This boudoir was decorated with panels entirely covered by elegant paintings of the celebrated miniaturist Van Spaendonck. The panels were twelve in number, of a gray-white color, covered with garlands of roses and myosotis, arabesques, doves, bows and arrows, butterflies and myrtle branches. A cut of one of these panels is here given. This boudoir ended in an alcove hung with looking-glasses, designed to repeat and multiply the charms of the occupant when she chose to recline on her divan. M. Double also possessed in his mansion the boudoir of Mme. de Pompadour, an idea of whose decoration may be acquired from the cut. The panels are gray-white, with gilt ornaments. At the end is an alcove containing an ottoman or divan, in celadon green silk, embroidered with flowers. The centre panel of the ceiling is an apotheosis of Pompadour by her favorite painter Boucher. Another boudoir, that of Mme. Adeline,

and carving of the trees and foliage were painted to imitate nature. Finally the whole of this decoration was fixed on a partition of no great thickness, around which ran a spacious corridor, with accommodation for musicians.

In modern times the boudoir has lost the

essentially gallant and voluptuous characteristics that distinguished it in the last century; it has become a sort of private salon, the woman's sanctum corresponding, in the woman's apartments, to the study or *cabinet de travail* in the men's. To tell the truth, it is a room that you rarely find, except in very large houses, and then it is frequently a small room opening out of the lady's bedroom. The reader will be good enough to remember that in the houses of all



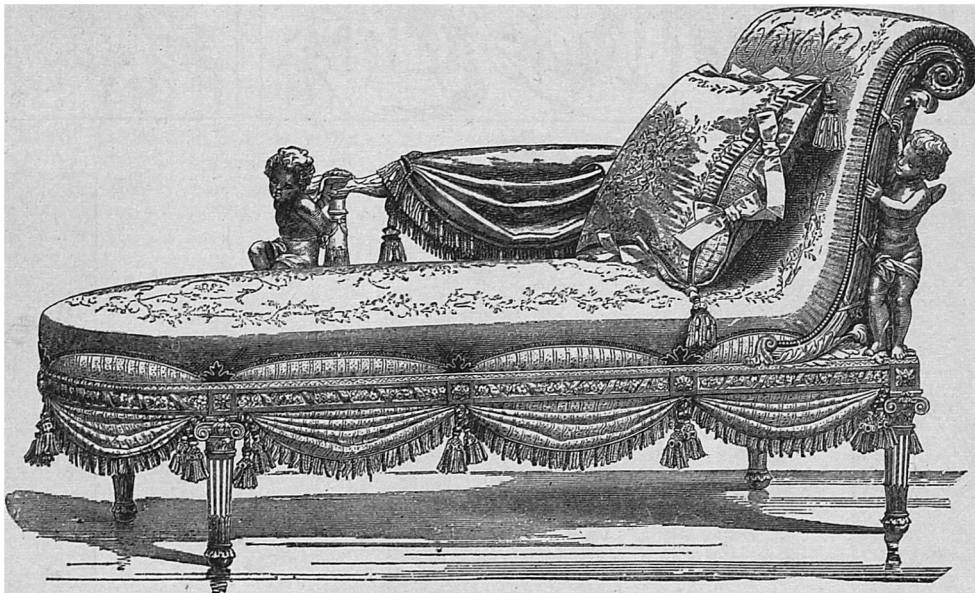
PANEL IN THE BOUDOIR OF Mlle. DUTHÉ.

well-to-do and elegant French people, the master and the mistress of the house each has a bedroom—the *chambre de Madame* and the *chambre de Monsieur*. The boudoir, then, is a room with one door and one window, and long rather than square, so that one end may be rather dimly lighted. The light will be further tempered by curtains and shadows. The room, in short, will be

a place of retirement, a retreat for days of ennui or headache—for days when the fair lady may feel out of humor with everybody, including herself, or when she seeks solitude for reflection—for study—for calling up old souvenirs, or, may be, for an extremely private *tête-à-tête* with her dearest women friends. The boudoir in the modern house is the room utterly inaccessible to the profane. It is the woman's own private and sacred little den, as Lady Barker would say.

The small proportions of the room and its destination will readily guide the choice of furniture. Everything must be small, delicate, feminine, coquettish. The chairs, the tables, the desk, the *bonheur du jour*, the couch, the screens must be, to use a French word, *mignon* and pretty. The upholstery must be silk, or some fine and silky material; no woolen stuffs, no heavy damask, no

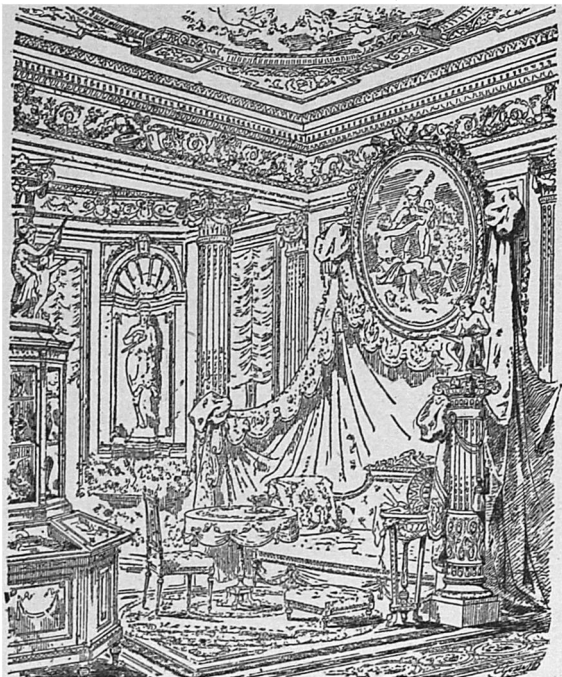
weighty velvet. Let the patterns be small, fine stripes, tiny bouquets, isolated flowers, and, for the setting, use white and gold, or white lacquer, picked out with threads of tender tones. For ornaments we must have the finest little bronzes, a profusion of Saxe and precious porcelain, and exquisite bibelots. As for style, there is hardly



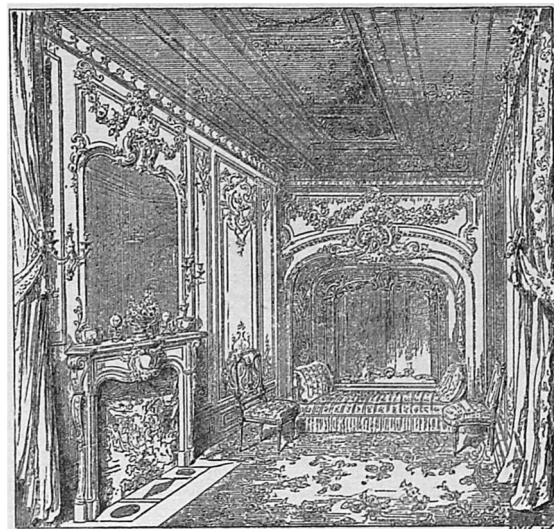
SOFA, STYLE LOUIS XVI. DESIGNED BY HENRI FOURDINOIS.

has been described by the Countess de Bradi: "It was entirely covered with looking-glasses, on which were painted tufts of lilacs and roses. The floor and the broad divans were covered with silk plush, made expressly at Lyons, which imitated grass, dotted here and there with flowers. The room was lighted from the roof, and blue and white gauze, draped irregularly, formed a transparent ceiling, through which penetrated a light like that of the moon on a misty summer's night.

Still another notable boudoir is that described by Bastide in *La petite maison*, a little masterpiece, to which we must always refer when talking about the elegance of the past. In this boudoir, as in that of Mlle. Adeline, all the walls were covered with looking-glasses, the joints of which were marked by artificial trunks of trees, carved, massed, and decked with foliage with admirable art. These trees were arranged in such a manner as to seem to form a quincunx; they were strown with flowers and laden with girandoles, the candles of which produce a light graduated in the glasses by means of applications of draped gauze, the effect then produced being to make you imagine yourself in a natural arbor, lighted artificially. The ottoman, or *lit de repos*, resting on a parquet floor of compartments of rosewood, was placed in a niche or alcove, enriched with green and gold fringe and tassels, and provided with cushions of different sizes. The cornice and ceiling were likewise covered with looking-glasses; the woodwork



BOUDOIR OF LOUIS XVI. STYLE.



BOUDOIR OF MME. POMPADOUR.



any rule to be laid down; evidently the Gothic, the feudal, and the Renaissance models are unsuited; the Louis XIV. style is only appropriate where pomp and imposing splendor are needed. Of the French styles those of the Louis XVI. are admirable, and marvels might be worked with Japanese, Chinese, Arab and other oriental models, even the neo-Roman style of the Directory, in which of course Mme. Récamier's interior was fitted up. A specimen of this Directory style may be seen in the accompanying cut, representing a white stucco panel by Brunau, light blue ground with frames in gold, the arabesques, caryatids, etc., white stucco, relieved with blue and gold.

At the present time the French are producing great quantities of delicate lacquer work, cabinets, tables, étagères, etc., in the Japanese and Chinese style, intermingled with incrustations of pearl and enamel, and panels of lacquer. The vernis-Martin furniture is also greatly in vogue for ladies' rooms. This varnish, the reader will remember, is of a limpid transparency, which permits of it being

the wood appears covered with a simple coat of white paint, plain or lacquer-varnished, and picked out with a thread of lilac or sky blue. A charming boudoir might be composed in this style:—the mirrors would be surrounded by some amorous trophy, with its billing-doves and flaming torches; the consoles would have white marble tops, and the furniture would be upholstered in very light *broché* satin, or in light-toned striped silk, that is to say, silk with the pattern in bands, or, as the French say, in columns *soie a colonnes*. The purity and delicacy of this furnishing would be relieved only by the clock, the candlesticks, the andirons, and a few bronzes, all *mat* gilded and unburnished, but fine as jewelry. Indeed, if you please, the clock may be of lapis lazuli, inlaid with diamonds, as Marie Antoinette's clock was.

In the furnishing of her boudoir a woman has perfect liberty; only the destination of the room will naturally lead her to seek prettiness rather than grandeur, and in intimacy rather than style. For this reason I say, unless some exotic fancy be

the necessity for commerce of obtaining a *pâte* more resisting than the *pâte tendre* gave the chemists precedence over the artists, and the composition of the matter precedence over the elegance of the ornamentation. In our modern industrial art this beneficial influence of woman seems too often wanting. Our artists often have style, but they rarely have sentiment, and it is from the women that the sentiment comes in art as in other matters. In America, where the decorative art movement is yet in its infancy, the influence of the women may play an immense rôle. Let us hope that they will realize the gravity of their mission, and be guided in all their decorative doings, both in furniture and in personal attire, by the dictates of appropriateness, which are synonymous with those of good taste; and, by the caprices of a fancy, and a sentiment based upon exquisite elegance, and simple and unaffected refinement.

I call the special attention of my readers to the model of the sofa and the couch, cuts of which accompany this article. The couch, designed and



DESIGN FOR ARMORIAL SCREEN BY RUDOLPH B. IRMTRANT, NEW YORK.

applied over the most delicate painting; generally the ground of the furniture is gold, either plain or sprinkled, like fine Japanese lacquer, and on this ground are painted subjects in the tone and style of Watteau, the whole surrounded and relieved by rocailles, and applications of finely chiselled and gilt bronze. Nothing can be more charmingly feminine than a work table or *vide-poche* in vernis-Martin. The little spider table for instance, with its quaintly bowed legs and heart-shaped top, covered with some delicious scene on a background of soft green foliage and vapory blue sky. Or to quit the curves and eccentricities of the Louis XV. style, with its rocailles and profusion of bronze ornaments, and carvings, and gilding, what can be more suitable for furnishing a woman's own private den than the style of Louis XVI.—epoch of delicacy in all things, when wood entered upon an entirely new phase. The forms of the wood become more sober, the details more simple and refined, and the coquetry of simplicity is carried so far that gilding and ornament are discarded altogether, and

carried into execution, nothing more appropriate can be found for a boudoir than Louis XVI. or Louis XV. objects—the Louis XV. that we owe to an adorable woman, almost a queen, to Mme. de Pompadour, the founder and creator of Sèvres porcelain. In certain respects the life of Mme. de Pompadour may be held up as an example to women of all ages. She loved the arts, herself practised them as a refined and not unskilful amateur, and, by her influence, created a charming fashion in decorative art. In France Mme. de Pompadour was the maker of the *Joli*, of the pretty, and, above all, of the femininely pretty in art. Take the Sèvres porcelain for instance, into whose *pâte tendre* Mme. de Pompadour put something of her beauty, of her smile, of her charm; and so the Louis XV. Sèvres, with its delicious grace and mannerism, is, essentially, the pretty woman's porcelain—born of a caprice, and fashioned for light and perfumed fingers. Remark how, when Pompadour died, Sèvres suffered from the loss of her inspiration; the porcelain fell into bad taste, and

executed by M. Henri Fourdinois, with its supporting cupids and beribboned pillow, is, *par excellence*, a boudoir couch. The style is transition between Louis XV. and Louis XVI., the curved lines being comparatively sober, and admitted only to permit of folded drapery. The sofa is simple and elegant in the extreme—executed in white and lilac it would make a charming piece of furniture.

GAS LIGHT, in a large room, would be much more available, if dispensed through pretty, straight or branching burners on brackets at convenient intervals around the wall; and would have a far better general effect than the usual centre glare. Perhaps some might find their advantage in tiny one-light pendants, hanging by dainty chains, in the four corners of the drawing-room. Simple brass gas brackets are not very expensive, and some look very graceful. Brazen sconce plates are costly, but, with rich *repoussé* and chased work, are highly decorative and have a brilliant effect.